

ALDEN MARCH





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1795-1869
Alden March, M. D., LL. D.

Dr. Alden March was a native of Sutton, Worcester county, Mass. He was born in 1795, and in September of this year would have been seventy-four years of age.

His father was a farmer of intelligence and integrity, and all of Dr. March's early life was spent upon the farm, engaged in the ordinary labors of farm work. His early education was acquired at the district school, with the exception of a few months at the academy at Monson, Mass. He attended medical lectures at Boston and Providence, and pursued the study of his profession with a brother, who had served in the army of the United States during the war of 1812. He graduated at the medical school connected with Brown's University, in 1820, and immediately removed to this State. For a few months he taught school at Cambridge, Washington county, where an elder brother resided.

In the winter of 1820, he removed to this city, and commenced the practice of medicine with Dr. John Willard, an eminent physician, who died more than a third of a century ago.

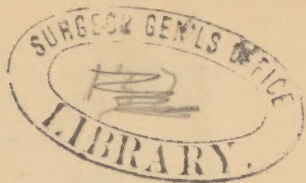
In 1821, Dr. March commenced a course of dissections and demonstrations, in this city, to a small class of medical students and young physicians. His rooms were in Montgomery street, in a small wooden building, where the Bethel church now stands.

At that time there was a strong prejudice against the dissection of the human body, and Dr. March was obliged to make the journey to Boston overland, in a private carriage, to procure subjects for dissection.

He made his first journey alone, in an open wagon, in winter; and, having procured his material, with the aid of a fellow-student in Boston, he returned over the mountains, and as he reached the city was nearly lost in the floating ice of the Hudson, which suddenly broke up by a freshet.

Such an enterprise would be deemed quite too formidable at the present day. These lectures were continued without interruption, except for a single term, during every winter, until the establishment of the Medical College in this city, in 1838.

In 1824, Dr. March, having acquired much celebrity as an anatomist and surgeon, was appointed Professor of Anatomy and Physiology in the Vermont Academy of Medicine, at Castleton. He held this office, with distinguished ability and success, ten years, delivering



at the same time his regular course in Albany, to a constantly increasing class of medical students.

He resigned his professorship at Castleton in 1834, his surgical business having increased to such an extent as to occupy his whole time and attention.

As early as 1829, he delivered a public lecture on the "Propriety of establishing a Medical College and Hospital in Albany." In regard to the hospital, we quote his words as follows:

"We have a population of 20,000, of which many are destitute and friendless foreigners, dependent upon public charity for relief. One of the advantages that might be expected from the establishment of a hospital and college in this city would be to elevate the character of the profession, and to keep up with the improvements of the day. I cannot close without expressing the hope, that the effort now making by the friends of science and learning will be continued, and rewarded with success; that before long our city will boast of a well-conducted medical college and hospital; institutions favorable alike to the interests of science and humanity."

These prophetic words were spoken forty years ago, and ten years of persistent effort passed away, during which he petitioned every Legislature for an act of incorporation before his sanguine and long-deferred hope was fully realized.

I have said that during one winter his course of lectures was abandoned. It is but proper to state that this was in consequence of his stout heart faltering before the many obstacles presented, and had he not received new courage from one who is yet among us, the Albany Medical College might never have been established. In 1838, his student, Dr. Armsby, who succeeded him at Castleton as Professor of Anatomy and Physiology, and who had been long associated with him as partner and lecturer in this city, relinquished his chair in Vermont, and devoted his whole time to aid Dr. March in establishing the Albany Medical College.

Dr. March being, at this time, fully occupied with practice, the labor of raising the necessary funds to fit up the building, and to make and arrange a Museum of Anatomy, devolved chiefly on Dr. Armsby.

But Dr. March's eminence as a surgeon was mainly instrumental in attracting students to this new field of learning. His reputation as the most skillful and practical anatomist at this time had become widely extended. This was now destined to be followed by a like brilliant career as a teacher of surgery.

It was a part of the plan to make the Medical College the nucleus of a State University at the capital, with departments of Medicine

Law, Science and the Industrial arts. With efficient co-operation here, in this city, the plan could long since have been successfully consummated.

Dr. March was the first to establish and inaugurate in this country the admirable system of College clinics, in which the poor received gratuitous medical and surgical aid by applying at certain hours at the College.

Many thousands have thus shared in his beneficent charity, while the profession and the public have enjoyed most desirable advantages.

Since the successful establishment of our Medical College, Dr. March has been connected and identified with nearly every public enterprise that has been undertaken for the benefit of Albany.

His professional fame has extended throughout the length and breadth of the land. In surgery, he has had few equals, perhaps no superior. This is the universal expression of his compeers, the profession and the public. For nearly forty years his name has been a household word in our city, and over the State and country. He has probably performed more bold and formidable surgical operations, in private practice, than any other American surgeon.

Dr. March made several trips to Europe, visiting the most celebrated medical establishments of the old world, and gathering from every source rich material with which to illustrate his instructions and benefit the profession.

He was eminently a man of progress, and kept himself thoroughly posted in all the improvements of the day. He examined candidly every new theory and practice, and judged of each impartially. Dr. March was elected to the several offices of President of the Albany County Medical Society, of the State Medical Society and of the American Medical Association; the highest medical honors conferred upon the members of our profession. During his earlier life the degree of A. M. was several times conferred upon him by literary institutions, and a few years ago Williams College, in his native State, conferred the degree of LL. D.

He was open, frank and generous, true, sincere and faithful in all the relations of life. He was an honest man, an ardent patriot, and a devoted Christian. At his death, our city was shrouded in gloom; at his funeral, our streets were filled with mourners, as they had seldom before been filled. The beauty, the purity, the nobleness of his character, will form an enduring monument to his memory, and places before us an example worthy of all emulation.

MARCH (Alden)

